

Town of Shirley

BOARD OF SELECTMEN



7 KEADY WAY – SHIRLEY, MASSACHUSETTS - 01464-2812

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator

TEL: (978) 425-2600, x121

Fax: (978) 425-2602

March 13, 2014

Dear Residents of Shirley,

Spring is in our sights and with spring comes Town Meeting. Town Meeting is set for Monday, June 2, 2014. This year there will be some changes. Most notable a new Moderator; George Knittel has decided not to run for Moderator. Along with a new Moderator, this will be my first Town Meeting in the Town of Shirley. I am looking forward to it and hope for a unified budget. Currently the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen are on the same page with the budget.

Looking at the budget my goal is to have the Town spend to its revenue and rely less on Free Cash. I have proposed a weaning off of the Free Cash for reoccurring operating budget expenses. This decision was supported by the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Once a decision was made on how to approach the budget, I proposed to the selectmen cuts in hours and a layoff.

The first action was through the elimination of the Assistant Tax Collector position. On the Annual Town Meeting Warrant there is an article to change the Tax Collector position from Elected to Appointed. The reason for this is to merge the Tax Collector and Treasurers office. Most Towns have one Tax Collector/Treasurer. The elimination of the Assistant Tax Collector is a consolidation to begin to merge these departments. This will be not only a savings in salary/wages but, also efficiency in work.

The second action was through a cut of five (5) hours in Planning Board Assistant's position. This five hour cut will not only save money in wages but the benefit as well. The reason this position was targeted was based from a payroll analysis that I conducted over a two (2) year period. What I found was that time and leave has been taken constantly and the regular number of hours actually worked (in building) was far less than 20 hours per week, which the position is currently budgeted. The average number of hours over the 104 weeks was a little over 8 hours per week.

More cuts and/or layoffs could occur but the selectmen need more discussion. A lot depends on the Regional Schools Districts Assessment. The Regional School District is asking for an increase assessment of \$452k. This is \$200k over my proposed budget. If this amount passes Town Meeting it will be detrimental to the municipal side of Shirley. This could be perceived as us against them, and it is not. Shirley simply is limited on its revenues and has cut their expenses to the bone. For those who don't know, there are three (3) DPW employees, two (2) full time Fire Fighters, nine (9) Police Officers (including Chief) and four (4) Dispatchers. These are areas of Public Safety, this is the reason you pay your taxes. Why I bring up this point is simple, I would not support any further cuts to Public Safety. I have identified cuts and a layoff that I feel will not impact services, but if the schools annually ask for over 8% increases to their assessment, Shirley will not be able to sustain its municipal staff.

These targeted cuts and layoff will help the Town long term. There are also efforts to change Health Insurance. These two combined efforts will shrink the deficit without hurting services. As long as the entire Town spends to its revenues, the Town will be able to sustain itself moving forward.

In conclusion, I would like to complement the employees of Shirley. Residents should know that the employees realize that there is a plan to improve Shirley's financial situation and through these tough decisions have stepped up to the plate. Change is never easy, and most employees are residents, so thank you to the employees who support the efforts, and work as hard as they do, even with all the changes.

Sincerely,
Patrice Garvin,
Shirley Town Administrator